Working with the Web Forms Designer

This chapter introduces the design tools that Visual Studio provides for developing Web Forms. If you have used any kind of rapid application development (RAD) tool or drag-and-drop designer, then you will recognize the basic themes that run throughout the Web Forms tooling.

You might get the impression in this chapter that I am not a fan of the Web Forms design tools. There is a degree of truth to this. I am uncomfortable with the idea of trying to hide away the details of HTML and HTTP when developing a web application, especially when this abstraction goes only so far. That said, I do like the way that the tools are tightly integrated with one another, even if they fall short of their original goal. The tools are smart and helpful, and they can be very convenient. In short, I like the tools, but I prefer to use them to aid me in using HTML and related technologies, rather than expecting them to hide the complexity.

Creating a Simple Web Forms Project

The best place to start exploring the Visual Studio Web Forms tools is to create a simple web application, as follows:

1. Create a new project in Visual Studio using the ASP.NET Empty Web Application template, as shown in Figure 14-1. I have called the project WebFormsApp.
Figure 14-1. Creating the WebFormsApp ASP.NET project

2. Right-click the project in the Solution Explorer window and select Add ➤ New Item to open the Add New Item dialog.

3. Select the Web Form template and set the name of the new item to be Default.aspx, as shown in Figure 14-2.